

Looking In on Congress From the House Gallery

A CONGRESSMAN'S DAY

By CONGRESSMAN GUY U. HARDY

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Seniority or length of service has long been a controlling factor in many things in the house of representatives. I suppose it has always been so more or less, and it is a little more so now than formerly, if possible.

A member gets his office room in the house office building, his seat at committee tables, his rank on his committee, his chairmanship of committee, his place as a conferee on conference committees of the house and senate, and many other little favors and big opportunities for influence through seniority.

There was a time when the speaker had some choice in fixing up committees and chairmanships. You heard Uncle Joe Cannon roundly "cussed" about his exercise of that privilege a few years ago. Even then most of the chairmen were selected because they had served longest on the committees. But the speaker had some latitude and he did make some independent appointments in an effort to put the best qualified man in the place. And often such appointment raised Cain. About twelve years ago there was a revolution. Uncle Joe was defeated for speaker, new rules were adopted. Committee assignments are now made by a large committee on committees and the seniority rule is closely adhered to. There has been but one notable exception in years. The present chairman of appropriations was not the high man but the second high man on the list.

Chairmen of committees have much power and influence in directing legislation. They can help write legislation, help push it through the committee or hold it back. They have charge of it on the floor. Many bills pass the house in one form and the senate in another. If one house refuses to accept the amendments of the other, the bill is sent to conference. Conference committees include three or five members from each house. The house conferees now usually consist of two Republicans and one Democrat or three Republicans and two Democrats who have served longest on the committee. These conferees get together and agree to anything they can and report their findings back. These reports are usually accepted by both houses.

The seniority rule has been much criticized, and there is room for criticism. But there is something to be said for it. Chairmen have the advantage of long experience on their committees. If they are not dubs they must have learned much about the business in hand, and usually dubs do not remain long in congress. Any other method of selection would start log-rolling, build up machinery and factions and breed strife and trouble.

The old members are for the seniority rule, and while the new members may be critical, I rather fancy we will never get far away from it.

However, after all is said, it does sometimes appear that seniority and long service have more influence and power in the house of representatives than brilliancy and ability.

WHEN A CONGRESSMAN DIES

When a congressman dies the house solemnly passes a resolution of acknowledgment and then adjourns. But usually by common consent the resolution is held on the speaker's desk until the business of the day has been completed, and at about 5 or 5:30 o'clock the resolution is read, passed and the house stands adjourned.

The resolution always runs the same. It reads:

"Resolved, That the house has heard with profound sorrow of the death of Hon. Mr. Blank, a representative from the state of —"

"Resolved, That the clerk communicate these resolutions to the senate and transmit a copy thereof to the family of the deceased.

"Resolved, That as a further mark of respect this house do now adjourn."

Few things are permitted to interfere with the business of the house. The work goes grinding on through the weeks and months. The house passes laws setting apart holidays that others may rest, and celebrate, and revere the memory of notable men, but the house goes on with the nation's business without resting or celebrating.

The house evidently thinks that the best respect it can pay to the memory of the country's notables and its own dead is to go on with its important work. And so it does, usually.

Occasionally, if business is not too pressing and if the deceased member was more or less prominent, the resolution is passed soon after the house meets at noon. And when that happens I dare say that most of the members feel a good deal as the schoolboy feels when a teacher or a fellow pupil dies and school is dismissed; they enjoy getting a day off.

Seventeen members are usually appointed to attend the funeral and when a member dies in office he is likely to have a notable gathering at his graveside.

A day is set apart when those who knew him best pay eloquent tribute to

his work and memory. Here again the economical tendency of congress is shown, as the day set is always a Sunday when other business is not up for consideration. The speeches delivered on this occasion are published in the Congressional Record, and a little booklet containing them is made up, each member being given a few copies.

The other day I looked up a copy of one of these memorials for a gentleman in Pueblo. It was the memorial address on the life and character of James N. Burns of Missouri, delivered February 23, 1889. Although this was over 33 years ago, I was surprised to note how many gentlemen spoke on that day whose names are well known to us of this day; and some of the addresses are notable examples of eloquence. Ex-Speaker Henderson, Dockery, Holman, Randall, Breckenridge, Butterworth, Stone, Grosvenor, Cockrell, Voorhees, Hale, Gorman and Vest. Surely an array of brilliant names.

It is customary for congress to vote a year's pay to the widow of a deceased member.

There are many deaths in congress. I am told about eighteen a year, and the flag on the house office building flies at half-mast a good deal of the time.

In the present congress there have been twelve deaths and it is only about half over. They are as follows: Fred L. Blackmon of Alabama, Samuel M. Taylor of Arkansas, John A. Elston of California, William E. Mason of Illinois, William H. Frankhauser of Michigan, Charles E. Van de

Water of California, Henry D. Flood of Virginia, Prince J. Kulo Kr. of Hawaii, Lucian W. Parrish of Texas and Samuel M. Brinson of North Carolina.

Two of these members committed suicide and two were killed in automobile accidents.

Over in the senate when a death occurs the governor of the state appoints a senator to fill the vacancy until the next regular state election. A constitutional amendment has been suggested to provide that vacancies in the house should be filled in like manner. Such an arrangement would save the states much money which special elections necessarily cost.

Home Problem of Members.

One of a congressman's little troubles is the home problem, getting a house to live in. Washington is the highest priced city in the country. Property and rents are high. If a man is there alone he can live at a hotel. If he has a family he must have a house or an apartment. The hotels are high priced. The houses and flats are out of sight.

What members pay for houses of course depends upon what they get and want to pay. Several members pay \$7,500 a year rent, and quite a number pay from \$3,600 to \$5,000. Of course they do not live on their salaries. They get something from back home. The members who try to live on their salaries, or nearly so, pay from \$150 to \$250 a month for a furnished house. And you don't get as much in Washington for \$200 a month as you can get in Colorado cities for \$50.

Within the moderate prices, houses are very hard to get and usually undesirable. Most residence property in Washington is built in rows—houses in solid blocks like store buildings. They are usually 17 to 20 feet wide, three stories high with three rooms on each floor, windows only in front and back, a front yard 10 or 12 feet deep.

First Congress Met in 1789.

The congress in session at this time is the Sixty-seventh congress. The first congress under the Constitution met in 1789. It should have met on March 4, but a quorum did not show up so it adjourned from day to day until April 1, when it opened for business. On April 6 of that year both houses met in joint session and canvassed the electoral vote for President and vice president, George Washington was found to be elected President and John Adams, vice president.

Congress Lasts Two Years.

Congress consists of a two-year term. There are two regular sessions and occasionally a special session or two. Members of the house of representatives are elected for two years and senators for a term of six years. The congress elected in November does not convene in regular session until the first Monday in December of the following year. But for several years a special session has been called soon after the 4th of March following the election.

Hearing the Other Side.

"You have decided to stay on the farm?"

"Yes," said Mr. Cobbles. "I get discouraged durin' th' week, but I cheer up considerably on Sundays."

"How is that?"

"I listen to people who come out here from town in their automobiles. After I hear them tell their troubles I forget that I have any of my own."

True Detective Stories

THE FINAL DETAIL

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THE annals of crime disclose a surprisingly large percentage of cases in which the criminal, having spent months or even years in building up the superstructure of his scheme, makes a fatal blunder in connection with some apparently unimportant detail—a blunder which wrecks his entire plan and brings his operations to the attention of the authorities.

For example, the chances were more than a thousand to one that William Brockway, counterfeiter, being desirous of securing a proof of a plate on which he was working, would select a printer who was not a personal friend of a prominent detective. But chance, which so often plays a leading role even in true detective stories, directed him to a man who knew A. L. Drummond, of the United States Secret Service, well enough to call him by his first name.

"This man came into my place yesterday afternoon," reported the printer, "and wanted some proofs pulled of a plate which he had with him. I took one look at the plate and told him to come back today—said my machinery was out of order. He didn't leave the plate, but he didn't have to. I saw what it was—the figure \$1,000, surrounded by a lot of scroll work. 'If he returns today,' directed Drummond, 'pull his proofs for him and hold one of them for me. A couple of my men will be outside your shop, so signal them and they will follow your customer.'"

The plan worked according to schedule and, shortly after receiving a proof of the mysterious plate, Drummond got word from his operatives that they had trailed the suspect to a house on Greenwich street. In addition, one of the government agents had recognized him as William F. Brockway known to be the most expert counterfeiter in the country and the man who had achieved fame by manufacturing \$100,000 worth of bonds which the Treasury department had accepted as genuine—only to reverse its opinion some weeks later.

Drummond accordingly made a report of the entire matter to Washington, and forwarded a proof of the plate which Brockway had in his possession. To his amazement, the treasury officials stated that the figures and the scroll did not form a part of any government currency or bond issue and that, as federal funds could not be used except in the search for counterfeiters of money or government bonds, Drummond could not be permitted to handle the case.

Accordingly, all the data was turned over to the New York police, and Brockway dropped out of sight for nearly a year, until a rumor was passed along from Washington that the master counterfeiter was working on some coup which would be the biggest of his career.

Drummond knew where to find Brockway, but the secret service men had to work under a handicap, because the ex-convict appeared to have an uncanny way of knowing just when he was being followed. Then he would slip and twist and turn and lose himself, no matter how many men were trailing him.

As a last resort Drummond enlisted the services of his son, a boy of ten, whom he sent to the elevated station at Twenty-eighth and Sixth avenue, with instruction to play around there until he received a signal from two of the operatives. Brockway, not dreaming that the secret service had begun to use children as detectives, was unsuspecting and the boy followed him until he entered the St. James, hotel, at the corner of Twenty-sixth and Broadway. With that much of the trail already blazed, it was easy to pick up the rest, and within a few days Drummond was notified that the counterfeiter divided his time between the St. James and a house on Lexington avenue. His associates were two men of about his own age, men whom Drummond recognized as Lewis Martin and Nathan Foster, both of them proficient in all branches of the work connected with the manufacture and passing of counterfeit money.

But even then Chief Brookes of the secret service, declined to allow Drummond to handle the case officially, because all the indications pointed to a plot to counterfeit railroad bonds, rather than United States currency. It was only when Inspector Byrnes of the New York police force, asked permission to use Drummond as a private agent that Washington permitted him to continue with the case.

Using the proof of the \$1,000 scroll as a foundation, Drummond searched through all the prominent bond issues listed on Wall street, until he found its counterpart—the central portion of the bonds of the Central Pacific railroad. Armed with this information, which was essential to the securing of a definite and specific warrant, Drummond raided the house on Lexington avenue and Martin's room at the St. James' hotel. There, in addition to dies, seals and tracing paper, he found fifty-seven counterfeit \$1,000 Central Pacific bonds, all of which were so perfectly executed that one of the officers of the company said he would not have had the least hesitation of cashing the coupons.

Brockway had slipped up on only one detail, the choice of a printer to pull the proofs, but this slip cost him five years in the penitentiary!

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